

Design Review Report : Bettisfield, Newport, Shropshire

Date:	20 th September, 2018
Client:	Lee Smith
Architects:	Base architects, Shrewsbury
Proposal:	Single dwelling and associated workshop
Local Authority:	Telford and Wrekin
Site Survey:	Not required
Panel:	Paul Watson (chair), Meredith Evans

1. Background

A proposal for a dwelling on this site was reviewed by MADE on the 20th April, 2017 and the subsequent report has been forwarded to the local planning authority by the prospective developer's architects. The design has been refined in response to the comments made in the report and a second Design Review was held at MADE's offices on the 20th September, 2018 attended by the chair and one member of the original Panel.

The original report assessed the proposals against the requirements of (the then) Paragraph 55 of the NPPF in accordance with the local planning authority's policy position. The Panel had recorded its reservations regarding the appropriateness of this planning route but had stayed within its given brief.

Since then, the local planning authority has come to the view that Paragraph 55 (now 79 of NPPF July 2018) is no longer appropriate for the site of the proposed development and that it should be assessed against Policy HO 10 (iii) of its recently adopted Local Plan which relates to new housing in rural areas needing to be of 'exceptional quality or innovative design'. However the Panel understands that no further guidance or clarification has been made available to assist in the interpretation of this policy.

For its part, the Panel took the view that 'exceptional quality' had to be judged in a local, not national, context given the lack of any reference in Policy HO10 or its supporting text to NPPF: and that such judgement should, in the absence of any criteria contained in the Local Plan or other material published by the local planning authority, be exercised by identifying good practice which goes beyond the norm.

However the Panel also returned to its previous questioning of the appropriateness of the policy context for consideration of the proposed development. It noted the Judgments in *Wood v Secretary of State* which require the decision maker to consider whether, as a matter of fact on the ground, a site appears to be within a village (or other settlement) as the fact that it lies outside of a development boundary as designated in a development plan is not determinative of the point; and so, in its view, an argument could be made for considering the proposed development to be part of Newport and so not subject to Policy HO10. However, and again, it stayed within its given brief.

2. Design response to previous MADE Design Review

Overall the previous proposal was considered well thought through and an appropriate response to the site and adjoining buildings. The architectural approach, choice of materials and simple agricultural forms were thought to work well.

Some issues for further development were identified and these are summarized below together with the design response evident in the revised scheme:-

- Treatment of the spaces between the dwelling and the road and the countryside

The access arrangement has been modified to retain most of the existing hedge to the road. The parking arrangement to the front has been modified to allow a more practical arrangement and a better relationship with the entrance to the house.

It was noted that an arboricultural assessment had been undertaken and the buildings adjusted to ensure no adverse impact on the trees to be retained. Additional tree planting is now proposed on the boundary with the adjoining property to give an improved landscape structure along this boundary. The edge of the settlement would be also visually improved by the addition of the proposed dwelling given its architectural form and design compared to the current 1950s bungalow which forms this sensitive edge.

- Some rationalisation of fenestration to south elevation

This had been modified to give greater consistency of treatment with the rest of the dwelling that sits better with the agricultural building aesthetic being sought.

- Reduce the prominence of the balconies and ensure the treatment is more consistent with the rest of the building.

This element had been amended to recess the 'wrap around' balconies under the main roof and the balustrade is now constructed of timber slats matching the adjoining cladding instead of the glass panels originally proposed. The Panel suggested that a corner post be provided to maintain the strong planes of the roof and walls.

- The workshop function and related activities needed clarification

The access and parking arrangement had been modified and the role of the workshop clarified as a live/work space.

The roof lights of the workshop had been omitted which was welcomed as they had worked against the building's agricultural aesthetic. However the Panel suggested in this regard that the proposed PV panels be curved to follow the profile of the roof.

- The energy strategy needed further development along with other sustainability elements

An ecological report has been produced and a proposals are being developed to improve the bio diversity of the site with the creation of a pond, strengthening native species in the existing hedgerows and additional tree planting.

Energy consultants had developed a proposal for a zero carbon heating and cooling system that will form part of the design of and technology within the building.

The Panel considered that the changes made to the design were a positive response to the issues set out in the original report and the overall design was now a cohesive and well developed & high quality piece of architecture and one that responded well to this site. It Panel believed this proposal raises the standard of rural design in the area not only through the delivery of a very good piece of architecture but also through its bespoke and sensitive response to this particular site and one that would also enhance the surroundings.

Indeed, the Panel considered, in the context of the requirements of Policy HO10 that the proposed development could be considered of "exceptional quality" by virtue of

- the influence of energy strategy on layout & design both as proposed and in its adaptability for future change
- arboricultural surveys influencing at a detailed level siting & design
- its mixed use, combining living & work spaces
- the application of an agricultural aesthetic in contemporary architecture
- its response to & respect for setting, including both built form and the layout of external spaces, and the creation of an enhanced edge to a settlement boundary
- enhancement of biodiversity
- the processes of scoring against the Housing Quality Index and independent Design Review

Such virtues, in the Panel's view, go beyond the norm and should be welcomed.

Meredith Evans
Chief Executive
MADE